

Note: Due to unforeseen circumstances with one interviewee, the entire body of this research cannot be viewed publically. The owner is willing to privately share the content of this dissertation, upon request, to students also undertaking their own research. She can be contacted by email at yvonne.kiely5@gmail.com.

Why are there so few female Music Producers?

By

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the MA in Journalism and Public Relations, is my own; based on my personal study and/or research, and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation. I also certify that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarised the work of anyone else, including other students.

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Abstract

Music has had a place in human culture for thousands of years, and digital technology has made music production practices more accessible than ever to artists. Even with increased accessibility and multiple platforms and programmes for artists to learn these techniques, gender is still a defining feature of the music industry. This research draws from women's experiences in music to build a multi-layered understanding of how their careers are shaped by societal norms, gendered expectations and performances, the media and its objectification of women's bodies and their sexuality, the narrowing of the definition of 'woman' in the industry, the gendering of musical structures and space in the industry, and in wider society. Women and men travel different career paths in music, exist in different spheres in the industry, and face more obstacles in the development of a professional identity throughout their career. Six interviews with six women in various roles in the industry, and a content analysis of two widely known music magazines brought this research to these conclusions. What became apparent was that there are more female music producers in the industry than meets the eye; it is more so a matter of visibility and acknowledgement than there being so few women. While facing pressures from several angles at once, this research concludes that the less visible space that women do occupy can serve to carve out a new path for women in music, one that is not structured by a male history, and one that does not objectify women and their identities.

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1. Introduction

This research is guided by the question 'why are there so few female music producers?'. It is a question that draws attention to the lack of women at the production level of the music industry, and aims to shed light on this absence and the reasons why it exists. This issue has arisen in both academic (Wolfe, 2012) and non-academic literature (Haruch, 2010), whereby a representative figure of between two and five percent has been given to female producers, for reasons centred around forms of gender bias, a conservative industry, and workplace discrimination. But no definitive answer has yet been given. Following research into music festivals, it became clear that women are underrepresented in music (see appendix, pp. 110-114). This research argues that the path to becoming a producer contains different obstacles and barriers for individuals to face depending on which gender they occupy. Women face obstacles of embedded, internalised social norms of gender and performance in the music industry, women must negotiate gendered spaces that restrict their professional agency and construction of identity, structural inequalities act on their careers and limit acknowledgement of their musical ability, and objectifying practices of the media limit women's representation, visibility and affect women's experiences in the industry space. Music and gender have become linked in a process of production and consumption that can often go unnoticed or unquestioned. As a result, men and women occupy different worlds in music media and in actual musical experiences, and have unequal control over these worlds. This research indicates that there is a narrowing of femininity in music, a limiting choice being presented to women who wish to enter this field, and there are intensifying forces of objectification and marginalisation acting on women in the spaces of society. In conclusion, it is argued that the less visible space that women do occupy in the industry gives them the potential to cultivate an authentic representation of women, a counter-culture to the dominant cultural fantasy of women in music.

